



# Australian Bureau of Statistics

## 1301.0 - Year Book Australia, 1991

ARCHIVED ISSUE Released at 11:30 AM (CANBERRA TIME) 01/01/1991

### THE NATIONAL TRUSTS OF AUSTRALIA

This article has been contributed by the Australian Council of National Trusts.

To preserve the best from the past today for the future would most appropriately describe the purpose of the Trust movement in Australia.

The movement began in Australia in 1945 and was primarily initiated as a response to drastic changes in Australian cities in the post-war economic and population boom. The main streets of the central business districts in the cities of Australia saw considerable destruction of once-familiar streetscapes in favour of impersonal high-rise buildings lacking the gracious style and scale of nineteenth century Australia. The National Trusts emerged as organisations primarily concerned with the cultural and historic environment, although the movement is now also very much involved in the conservation of our natural environment.

The Trust movement began in 1945 in New South Wales and was followed by South Australia (1955); Victoria (1956); Queensland (1963); Western Australia (1964); Tasmania (1975); the Australian Capital Territory (1976) and the Northern Territory (1976).

The Australian Council of National Trusts was formed in 1965 to serve the national interests of the Australian Trusts. The Council, as the federal coordinating body of the National Trust movement, has the responsibility for coordinating policies, procedures and programs for implementation at State and Territory levels; to expressing and presenting opinions to national or international bodies; and to coordinating national sponsorship and education projects with State and Territory Trusts.

Today, the National Trusts have a total membership of over 80,000, a substantial force of people who care about Australia's heritage. One of the movement's great strengths is the extensive reserve of voluntary expertise and effort. Working on committees and in other ways the Trust's honorary workforce of approximately 6,506 volunteers undertakes a wide variety of tasks, working in close cooperation with staff. The movement employs approximately 442 staff members.

The main aim of the National Trust is to acquire, conserve and present for public benefit, lands and buildings of aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or other special values. This includes historic sites, buildings, towns or conservation areas, industrial remains, gardens, Aboriginal sites and the natural environment. The Trust aims to influence governments and other agencies, both national and international, to act to conserve such values, and to promote public appreciation, knowledge and enjoyment of such places.

Since the inception of the National Trust in Australia, over four decades ago, the National Trusts have played a leading role and have been involved in the extensive work of identifying those parts of our natural, Aboriginal and historic environment which are historically, aesthetically or scientifically significant and which are worthy of preservation. The places classified by the National Trusts have formed a basis for all other heritage registers of protected places and areas

in Australia.

Conservation action, supported by research, is the central feature of the work of the National Trust movement.

Surveys of natural, Aboriginal and historic environments are conducted in order to identify and document the landscapes, townscapes, historic buildings and industrial sites that are very much a part of Australia's environmental heritage. The Trusts maintain registers of such places. Currently about 20,474 places and areas of natural, Aboriginal and historic importance are classified by the National Trusts.

Submissions are prepared regularly on the environment which provide information to all levels of government to assist in planning and other processes in the interest of heritage conservation. These submissions also contribute to public discussion on conservation issues, promoting debate within the community.

The Australian Council of National Trusts and State and Territory Trusts have been involved in a host of conservation issues, not least of which have been the National Conservation Strategy, Kakadu National Park (NT); Lemonthyme and Southern Forests (Tas); Old Parliament House (ACT); Shelburne Bay (Qld) and Antarctica.

The Australian Council of National Trusts and the Trust movement have strived to develop strategies aimed at promoting an awareness of and interest in Australia's heritage by the public through education programs and other activities including the Open House program.

The Trusts own around 300 properties and through their own efforts spent approximately \$2.1 million in 1988-89 on the preservation of Australia's National Estate with \$619,000 assistance from the Commonwealth Government.

The Open House program seems to typify public understanding of the Trusts' activities. Trust properties attract about 2 million visitors each year. With major national sponsorship schemes, such as the Amatil 'A Gift to the Nation' of \$1.6 million and the 'Heritage '88' sponsorship of \$500,000 by the Commonwealth Bank, the Trust has been able to open to the public magnificently restored National Trust properties throughout Australia. Some of these include Bellevue Homestead in Queensland; Juniper Hall in New South Wales; Gulf Station in Victoria; Clarendon in Tasmania; Redruth Gaol in South Australia; The Old Farm at Strawberry Hill in Western Australia and the Hartley Street School in the Northern Territory. These and other Trust properties are open for public inspection and function hire as well as various Trust activities throughout the year.

The following description of a few Trust properties offers an insight into the work of the Trust in conserving Australia's heritage.

**Clarendon** via Evandale in Tasmania is situated 27 kilometres from Launceston. Clarendon, one of the great Georgian houses of Australia, was constructed of rubble, stone and stucco in 1838. The two-storey house has a main facade of five bays and a giant Ionic portico raised on a terrace marking its main entrance. The features include French windows and double doors with sidelights and a fanlight. At the rear two brick service wings partly surround rear walled gardens, with other outbuildings beyond. No other house was built in colonial Australia to equal the size of Clarendon which makes this property unique. The portico is also an unusual feature of a domestic building of the colonial period. A semi-basement housing domestic staff, offices and accommodation is also rare in Australia, relating more to English houses. It is the type of house where the 'upstairs and downstairs' principle applied.

Clarendon was built for wealthy woolgrower and merchant James Cox. He was the second son of

William Cox who pioneered the first road over the Blue Mountains in New South Wales. Situated on the banks of the South Esk River, Clarendon has extensive formal gardens and beautiful parklands. In 1962 the property was given to the National Trust by Mrs W.R. Menzies. The first restoration was completed in 1966, and in 1974 it was restored to its original appearance by the addition of the portico and parapet. The house has been suitably furnished by the Trust. Generous assistance provided by the Commonwealth Bank of Australia, and the State Government of Tasmania, enabled the National Trust to purchase the outbuildings in 1987.

It is generally accepted that high restoration and maintenance costs come hand in hand with the ownership of heritage properties. Since purchasing the outbuildings in 1987 the Trust has had insufficient funds to secure the structures. As the disintegration process continues the stables and coach house are in urgent need of restoration and maintenance, as is the small cottage on the property which ultimately could be let to provide funds to assist in maintaining the property. The water system needs urgent attention as the water pumped from a nearby river is not suitable for drinking and the capacity of the existing pump is insufficient and cannot provide suitable irrigation for the extensive gardens or provide the essential water for fire fighting purposes. There is still major work to be carried out at Clarendon which is an ongoing Trust project.

**The Old Farm at Strawberry Hill** in Western Australia was built in 1831 by Dr Alexander Collie, the first Government Resident at Strawberry Hill, then a farming settlement which had supplied the nearby military attachments with vegetables since 1827. When Governor and Mrs Stirling visited in November 1931 a garden stocked with an abundance of cauliflowers, cabbages, beans, peas and almost every other edible vegetable was ready for their use. In 1832 Mr J.L. Morely leased the property where he grew wheat. In 1835 Sir Richard Spencer RN, KCH, with his wife and nine children arrived at the settlement and took possession of Government Farm as it was then known. It was described at the time as consisting of 'twenty-four acres more or less with the buildings, fences, erected thereon. Commonly known by the name of Government Cottage and Garden or Farm at Strawberry Hill...' and together with the improved adjoining 106 1/2 acres was valued at 206 pounds and 14 shillings.

In the next ten years many improvements were made to the farm, with a two-storey extension added to the cottage in 1836 and the building of sheds, stables and barn carried out during that year. William Diprose was employed to build the extension, and many of the building materials used in the extension such as windows, flooring, store roofing and doors were shipped from England. In 1839 Sir Richard died, and not long after two sons also died in tragic accidents. All three were buried in a hillside grave not far from the house. In 1840 Lieutenant G.E. Egerton Warburton arrived with a detachment of the 51st Regiment in Albany. He married Augusta Spencer, daughter of Sir Richard and Lady Spencer. in 1842 and took up residence with her in Strawberry Hill after Lady Spencer and her three youngest sons left for England later that year.

Between 1855 and 1889 the farm was frequently unoccupied, and neglect and disrepair culminated in a fire in 1870 which destroyed the original wattle and daub house. The farm was subdivided by Joseph Spencer in 1886 and by 1889 the house was finally bought by Francis Bird for 1,500 pounds cash.

An architect, Francis Bird immediately began work on the restoration of Strawberry Hill - a difficult task after thirty years of neglect. The Bird family finally moved in on 18 December 1889. Mrs Bird changed the name of the property to 'The Old Farm' in 1890. Until 1956 the Farm remained the property of the Bird family.

When the Farm became the property of the National Trust in 1963, substantial parts of the main buildings had rotted away and much of the slate roof had to be replaced. 'The Old Farm' was gradually restored and refurnished as far as possible with the original furniture of the Spencer and Bird families and remains a monument to their pioneering work in the district. The Old Farm at Strawberry Hill was the first historic property in Western Australia to be restored and opened to

the public by the National Trust.

**Adelaide River Railway Station** in the Northern Territory. The main station building was completed in 1889 to service the Palmerston (later renamed Darwin) to Pine Creek railway, the first stage of the former North Australia Railway.

Facilities at the Station included the passenger station with refreshment room and a goods platform. A pump station on the river, overhead tank and stand pipe provided water for the steam engines. A triangle, cattleyards, and loading race were added in 1925 at the northern end of the Station. Extensions made during the war included provisions for ambulance trains.

By the early 1980s the building was in a sorry state and was threatened with demolition. Local people involved the Trust in efforts to save it, resulting in its full restoration in 1986. The building was opened to the public 100 years to the day after the first train steamed into Adelaide River.

The Open House program is one of the major activities of the Trust and is part of the public educational role that National Trusts throughout Australia have established and are striving to maintain. National Trusts have established many national educational projects which have, in part, taken the following form:

- Heritage Week celebrations held during April each year, are planned around a national theme. In past years there have been themes such as: 'World Heritage' and 'Industrial Heritage'. The theme for 1991 will be 'Save the Bush'.

Primarily Heritage Week is an awareness program sponsored and supported by a growing number of businesses, government bodies, conservation organisations, historic and cultural groups and community organisations in each State and Territory. Trusts include fund raising activities and membership drives in the program in their ever continuing efforts to promote and preserve Australia's natural, Aboriginal and historic heritage.

Heritage Week is a week filled with activities to suit everyone. The week covers activities such as: seminars and lectures on conservation and heritage matters; official receptions; afternoon teas, dinners and balls; concerts and dance exhibitions; heritage and bush walks; tours of historic sites; property open days; re-enactments; historic transport rides; craft and antique fairs; processions; street theatre; photographic and art exhibitions; launching of education kits and books; school programs and even camel patrols in the Northern Territory.

- The Australian Heritage Award launched in 1986 with a five year national sponsorship from Jones Lang Wootton, was designed to recognise outstanding contributions to the preservation and promotion of Australia's heritage. The Award, which over the past five years has been a \$10,000 cash endowment, is given for excellence in performance by an individual, association, government body or company.

There is one annual Australian Heritage Award with the selection being drawn from ten categories. These categories are Government, Planning, Private, Publications, Media and Education, Cultural Conservation and Interpretation, Architecture, Nature Conservation, Contemporary and Individual. Over the past five years six Awards have been presented, including a special Australian Bicentennial Heritage Award. These were:

1990 The Hyatt Hotel Canberra - Contemporary Category

1989 'Southland: The Maritime Exploration of Australia' - Government Category Western Australian Ministry of Education. Publications Section

1988 Australian Bicentennial Heritage Award - Jointly awarded to:

'Nature of Australia' - ABC Natural History Unit

'Australians: A Historical Library' - Fairfax, Syme and Weldon Associates

1988 'The Land of the Lightning Brothers' - Media Category  
Australian Heritage Commission

1987 Queen Victoria Building - Architecture Category  
Rice Daubney, Stephenson and Turner (Architects in Association)

1986 No. 1 Collins Street, The Olderfleet Buildings - Architecture Category  
Bruce Trethowan, Robert Peck YFWK Pty Ltd.

- 'Heritage Australia' is the quarterly journal of the Australian Council of National Trusts. The articles in this quality publication include all aspects of Australian heritage - Aboriginal, natural and historic.

State and Territory Trusts Newsletters, Journals and Magazines are produced to inform Trust members on the activities of each individual Trust giving up-to-date bulletins on conservation issues.

- Education Kits and Posters on 'World Heritage' (1989) and 'Save the Bush' (1990), both sponsored by the Department of the Arts, Sport, the Environment, Tourism and Territories, as well as individual State and Territory initiated projects like the Industrial Heritage Education Kit produced by the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) for Heritage Week 1990.
- Publications such as 'Australia in Trust', 'Lord Howe Island', Historic Buildings Book series and conservation bulletins to name but a few.
- There is a continuing program of conferences and workshops hosted by the Trust movement for example the international conference held in May 1990 - 'Heritage and Conservation: The Challengers in the Asia-Pacific Basin', with more workshops on various conservation subjects being planned for the future.
- Some State Trusts have established tour and real estate services for members and the general public alike. Tour services include educational tours overseas, excursions to other States and Territories and country areas, inspections of private and public properties, half day city walks and day trips. The real estate services, run in conjunction with licensed real estate agents, were formed in an effort to find sympathetic purchasers of properties with heritage value.
- Trusts also consult, on a regular basis, with government bodies, property developers, architects and property owners on proposals likely to affect places and buildings of historic, natural or Aboriginal significance.

The National Trusts are also involved with merchandising and have shops in properties and shop fronts throughout the States and Territories. A National Trust Committee develops and produces merchandise using the National Trust logo, however the shops are not restricted to selling only National Trust products and a wide range of merchandise can be found in the outlets.

These are only a few of the National Trusts activities and services. The Trust is a large organisation with a large agenda. It is the caretaker of Australia's heritage relying on public and government support and goodwill to ensure a continuing future for Australia's past.

For further information on the National Trusts of Australia please contact the Australian Council of National Trusts, PO Box 1002, Civic Square, ACT, 2608 or telephone (06) 247 6766, or facsimile (06) 249 1395.

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- A National Trust Invitation to Visit the Historic Houses of Australia, in association with

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